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Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–5	2
II.	Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/185 and 52/129	6–27	2
	A. Consolidation of electoral assistance capacities within the United Nations system	6–15	2
	B. Coordination with other organizations	16–22	4
	C. Ongoing activities	23–27	5
III.	United Nations experience	28–35	6
	A. Major United Nations missions	28–32	6
	B. Support for international observers	33–34	6
	C. Technical assistance and advisory services	35	7
IV.	Reflections for future activity	36–40	7
Annex			
	Summary of electoral assistance activities from 17 September 1997 to 30 September 1999		9

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to a request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/129 of 12 December 1997, recalling resolutions 49/190 of 23 December 1994 and 50/185 of 22 December 1995. Its purpose is to inform Member States about the status of requests received by the United Nations for electoral assistance and about the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the Organization's support for the democratization process in Member States.

2. The information contained in this report is presented in three main sections: (a) implementation of General Assembly resolutions 52/129 and 50/185; (b) United Nations experience in electoral assistance over the past two years; and (c) reflections on future activities. Additional details of specific assistance projects undertaken between 17 September 1997 and 30 September 1999 are contained in the annex.

3. Over the last two years 38 Member States made requests to the United Nations for electoral assistance. Since, in some cases, Member States requested assistance more than once during the reporting period, the actual number of requests totalled 48. Assistance ranged in scale from short-term technical assistance projects in Djibouti and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the organization and conduct of the popular consultation on the future of East Timor. The types of requests received during this biennium have confirmed a trend, identified in the previous report (A/52/474), which indicates that the number of large-scale missions is declining while requests for technical assistance are on the rise.

4. One important factor contributing to this trend has been the establishment, over the past seven years, of permanent national election commissions and administrative bodies in countries throughout the world. For many States engaged in democratization, the primary concern is no longer whether a particular election will be credible or not, but how the electoral process can be improved and refined over time. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness are new priorities for many election administrators. With the increased expertise and resources available at the national level, international assistance can be better targeted to support and complement existing national capacities. Based on the types of requests now being received from Member States, United Nations electoral assistance is clearly evolving from its earlier emphasis on a single electoral exercise to a longer-term, broader approach in support of national electoral institutions and processes.

5. A second factor in the changing needs for electoral assistance is the experience to date of many Member States in using elections as peaceful means of national decision-making and confidence-building. In many cases, elections have provided a focus for communication and cooperation among diverse national groups, encouraging the expression of views and opinions in a safe and neutral environment. Elections have also provided opportunities for concerted problem-solving and compromise — critical components in effective government. The efforts of Member States to strengthen their democratic institutions clearly demonstrate a conviction that electoral processes contribute to the long-term building of peaceful, stable societies.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/185 and 52/129

A. Consolidation of electoral assistance capacities within the United Nations system

6. In view of the increasing variety of demands for electoral assistance, cooperation within the United Nations system has expanded. Emphasis has been placed on the need to ensure concerted effort and to avoid duplication. Over the past two years, the cooperation of the Electoral Assistance Division, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has been enhanced and a number of innovative projects have been initiated.

7. The Electoral Assistance Division continues to provide direct support to the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs, who is the focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities. In August 1998 a new director was appointed to the Division after a hiatus of two and a half years. Shortly thereafter, staff formally reviewed and assessed the Division's activities since its creation in 1992 and discussed priorities for its future work. As a further tool for future planning, the Department requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the Division's past programmes and activities (E/AC.51/1999/3, annex and Corr.1). Based on the Division's assessments, consultations with external and internal partners and the Office's recommendations, the Division is reorienting its activities to better serve the needs now being expressed by Member States. In accordance with resolution 52/129, efforts are being made to enhance cooperation among the various organizations involved in electoral assistance and such

cooperation is providing an impetus for new projects and approaches to electoral assistance. Although traditional modes of assistance remain important, increasing priority must now be given to the new needs identified by requesting Member States: national capacity-building and the fostering of electoral networks and partnerships.

8. Over the past two years, the number of requests for electoral assistance has remained high. Compared with the preceding biennium, however, the requests have become more sophisticated, often requiring a combination of several types of assistance or phased assistance over a longer period of time. The requests submitted by Member States demonstrate their various stages of democratic development; as a result, needs assessment missions have a critical role in the formulation of appropriate responses by the United Nations. The socio-political context and governmental capacity are key considerations in elaborating assistance projects; timing and assistance options must be assessed and evaluated for compatibility with national expectations, traditions, resources and priorities. Effective project design therefore entails considerably more than a simple specification of technical requirements.

9. During the biennium, the Electoral Assistance Division was mandated to assist with two major missions: (a) preparations for elections in the context of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA); and (b) the organization and conduct of a popular consultation on the future status of East Timor. The latter resulted in the establishment in mid-May 1999 of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). Other requests related primarily to the coordination of international election observers and technical assistance.

10. With regard to UNDP activities, the Electoral Assistance Division and the Management, Development and Governance Division of UNDP plan to review and update the 1996 guidelines for electoral assistance. The guidelines, prepared jointly for the use of resident coordinators, will be revised to reflect the new capabilities of the two divisions and the new options available to Member States requesting assistance. The regional bureaux of UNDP in New York have recently established focal points for electoral activities in order better to coordinate with the Electoral Assistance Division regarding electoral assistance activities in their respective groups of countries. In the field, the Electoral Assistance Division has conducted a variety of needs assessments missions and worked closely with the relevant UNDP resident coordinators to help them design and establish appropriate technical assistance projects. UNDP has also made extensive use of the roster of experts maintained by the Electoral Assistance Division.

11. The Management, Development and Governance Division has recently expanded its portfolio to include studies on electoral assistance. In this context, UNDP recently completed a study entitled "Electoral management bodies as governing institutions" which emphasized the importance of ensuring that electoral commissions are independent, permanent and sustainable. The study provides operational programme guidance for developing the institutional capacity of electoral commissions.

12. UNV, a subprogramme of UNDP, is an important partner in the provision of electoral assistance. UNV has consistently identified and recruited highly qualified staff for electoral missions in various regions of the world. Particularly during 1998-1999, UNV has responded positively to many requests for electoral staff, often working on a very urgent basis to identify significant numbers of trained professionals appropriate to the needs of particular missions. Most recently, UNVs have assisted with elections in such diverse locations as the Central African Republic, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and South Africa. For the organization and conduct of the popular consultation in East Timor, some 400 UNVs served as the core electoral staff. Their professional expertise and dedication were instrumental in making the 30 August 1999 ballot possible.

13. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNDP, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) produced the first electronically published global information resource on elections (see para. 18 below). The Department also provided on-site electoral advice at the request of such Member States as the Central African Republic, El Salvador, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and Pakistan.

14. The technical cooperation programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continues to provide expert advisory services. In the past biennium OHCHR was actively involved with the electoral process in Cambodia (see A/53/400). In addition, OHCHR has provided technical assistance in the fields of constitutional law and legislative reform, and for the establishment/strengthening of an independent judiciary and of effective systems of human rights protection, including national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights; it has also provided support for institutions of civil society.

15. The United Nations Office for Project Services has demonstrated its effectiveness as an executing agency for many UNDP-funded electoral projects. The Office also

offers a diverse range of administrative management support services, including project management, recruitment of project staff, equipment procurement and administration of training programmes. The Electoral Assistance Division and the Office for Project Services are currently exploring options for a more streamlined working relationship. As one example of their collaboration, the Office recently assisted with the preparation in Mexico of a guide for election observation in CD-ROM format. The Mexican Federal Electoral Institute and Electoral Tribunal and the Autonomous University of Mexico also contributed to the project. The guide can be used to train both national and international observers and will be utilized for the Mexican elections in 2000. It is planned for the guide to be translated into English and French and adapted to specific country situations for use in other regions of the world.

B. Coordination with other organizations

16. Over the past biennium, the United Nations has actively sought to broaden its working relationships with other electoral assistance organizations. Since many electoral commissions have now organized several rounds of elections, their needs have become more specific and sophisticated. At the same time, they are also able to offer technical solutions and advice to their counterparts in other countries and regions. Many of the new international partnerships being created are aimed particularly at: (a) providing more options for effective assistance than would be available through one organization; and (b) strengthening regional capacities for solving technical problems and information exchange.

17. In the context of election observation and technical assistance, the United Nations has continued to work closely with several of its traditional partners in ensuring adequate international coverage of national elections. For the Nigerian elections of 1998/99, the United Nations and the Commonwealth coordinated deployments throughout the entire round of elections. The European Union contributed significantly towards the financing of the United Nations mission and provided essential technical expertise during the initial needs assessment phase. United Nations election observation activities continue to encourage and promote collaboration with regional organizations, particularly the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The United Nations also held several discussions with representatives of la Francophonie on future collaboration and common concerns.

18. The Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) project mentioned in paragraph 13 is a result of collaboration between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, IFES and IDEA. Intended primarily for the use of election administrators, ACE provides comprehensive information and analysis on technical alternatives in election administration, functions, processes and costs. ACE is now available to all interested parties on CD-ROM and at the ACE Web site, which were formally introduced to the public at a demonstration and press conference held at United Nations Headquarters in October 1998.

19. In another collaboration, the Electoral Assistance Division joined with UNDP, IDEA and IFES in developing the Election Process Information Collection (EPIC) project. The goal of the project is to gather basic information on national election processes and institutions and make such information available to interested users at an EPIC Web site on the Internet. The information will be updated periodically and additional information included as resources permit. The project questionnaire is currently being constructed and will be tested over the next year as a pilot project with a sample group of countries. Based on experience with the pilot project, the research design will be refined and adjusted for broader application.

20. In an effort to build on comparative strengths and advantages, the Electoral Assistance Division, Elections Canada, IDEA, IFE and IFES initialled an agreement in April 1999 to create an international electoral assistance consortium. The consortium, formally entitled the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development (PEDD), has undertaken an initial project in Guatemala and will consider additional projects on a continuing basis. The purpose of the consortium is to provide new opportunities in electoral assistance by drawing upon the various types of expertise and resources available through the consortium members. By drawing from such a pool, the consortium will be able to design and implement projects of far greater complexity and flexibility than could any single organization.

21. The United Nations collaborated in organizing two important conferences during the recent biennium. In November 1998 a regional conference for Central Asian election administrators was held in Almaty. Co-sponsored by the Electoral Assistance Division, UNDP, IFES and OSCE, some 60 election administrators discussed (a) how to raise professional standards of election administration; (b) transparency as a means of resolving electoral disputes; and (c) voter information strategies. At the global level, the Electoral Assistance Division, Elections Canada, IDEA and IFES co-sponsored the Global Electoral Organization (GEO)

Network conference from 11 to 14 April 1999 for representatives of regional election administrators' associations. The primary purpose of the meeting, which took place in Ottawa, was to encourage networking and exchange of experience among the various associations. Workshops were held on particular technical issues and the ACE project was formally introduced and demonstrated. The meeting was significant for bringing together election administrators from various regions for the first time.

22. In 1999, the Electoral Assistance Division began new partnerships with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The collaboration arose out of the 5 May 1999 agreements that mandated the United Nations to organize and conduct a popular consultation on the future of East Timor. External polling sites were designated in Australia, Macau, Mozambique, Portugal, the United States and elsewhere in Indonesia. AEC organized and conducted registration and polling in Australia; IOM took responsibility for all other external polling sites. Both organizations carried out their technical functions with exceptional efficiency and expertise and their regular coordination with UNAMET in Dili and United Nations Headquarters ensured consistency and transparency throughout the various phases of the popular consultation. Further opportunities for collaboration are now being explored.

C. Ongoing activities

23. The Electoral Assistance Division continues to maintain a roster of election experts, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 46/137 of 17 December 1991, and qualified candidates are added on a regular basis. As the types of requests for assistance have evolved, particular efforts have been made to expand the roster to cover the types of electoral expertise which are now in most demand. In 1998 the Electoral Assistance Division invited several regional associations of electoral commissions and some 40 national electoral commissions around the world to identify qualified electoral staff who might be interested in participating in United Nations electoral missions. Election observers are no longer included on the roster since they are most often provided by Member States or UNV. Rather, individuals proposed for the roster are carefully screened and hold specialized expertise in one or more electoral fields. The roster therefore continues to expand and serves as an essential resource for United Nations electoral assistance activities.

24. As of 30 September 1999 the balance of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, including both general and earmarked contributions, totalled an estimated US$ 740,350. The majority of the funds spent over the biennium was earmarked for specific projects; such contributions have been critical for the effective and timely implementation of United Nations electoral assistance. At the same time, and in response to resolution 52/129, the Electoral Assistance Division has been exploring new avenues for the provision of electoral assistance, seeking new and more effective means of assisting requesting States in building their national electoral capacities. Funding is necessary, however, for such innovative work to begin. The Department of Political Affairs has held preliminary discussions with the Office for Project Services and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in order to develop clear project goals and financing procedures for optimal use of the Trust Fund. The Division will contact interested Member States in early 2000 in order to discuss the status of the Trust Fund and prospects for new electoral assistance initiatives.

25. In seeking to learn from past experience, the Electoral Assistance Division organized a one-day colloquium on United Nations coordination and support activities for international observers of the 1998 Cambodian elections. The colloquium was divided into two sections, the first for United Nations staff and consultants and the second for representatives of other international organizations that also assisted with the Cambodian elections. A similar meeting is planned to review United Nations experience with the organization and conduct of the popular consultation on East Timor.

26. Civic education has been a standard component of large-scale electoral assistance projects for many years. As more national electoral commissions and administrators take a long-term approach to preparations for periodic elections, they are also focusing on the need for civic education not only at election time but, more importantly, as an ongoing activity. Civic education is clearly more than a general public information programme and requires careful planning and implementation. In order to respond to this increasing interest in civic education, the Electoral Assistance Division plans to hold a seminar in early 2000 which will bring civic education experts together with other relevant election experts in order to explore alternatives in the long-term approach to civic education.

27. The Electoral Assistance Division prepares a regular overview of electoral assistance activities, entitled "Electoral assistance activities of the United Nations system". The overview is compiled into an annual report, and is available from the Electoral Assistance Division upon request.

III. United Nations experience

A. Major United Nations missions

28. During the present biennium the United Nations provided electoral assistance in the context of only one peacekeeping operation. The assistance provided in this case involved several phases and various types of electoral expertise. Based on an initial request from the Government of the Central African Republic, the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission in February 1998. In March 1998 the Security Council adopted resolution 1159 (1998) of 27 March 1998 creating the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic. In that context, the United Nations provided both technical assistance and support for international observation of legislative elections which took place on 22 November and 13 December 1998. In 1999, the Security Council requested the United Nations to assist with the conduct of presidential elections that were held on 19 September 1999. In addition to the activities of the electoral component of MINURCA, the United Nations continues to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities under a UNDP project. More detailed information concerning MINURCA is contained in the annex to this report and in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/1998/540, S/1998/783 and Add.1, S/1998/1203, S/1999/98, S/1999/416, S/1999/621, S/1999/788 and S/1999/1038).

29. In 1999 the United Nations planned and implemented the second organization and conduct mission in United Nations history; the first was the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993. In May 1999, the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal signed an Agreement on the question of East Timor and two supplementary agreements on the modalities for a popular consultation of the East Timorese through a popular ballot and on security arrangements (the New York Agreements). The purpose of the popular consultation was to allow the East Timorese people to decide whether to accept or reject a proposed constitutional framework for special autonomy status for East Timor within the Republic of Indonesia. The United Nations, in order to carry out its responsibilities under the Agreements, established the United Nations Mission for East Timor (UNAMET) in mid-May 1999. UNAMET had three primary components: electoral affairs, political affairs and civilian police. In view of the time constraints imposed by the political situation, the popular consultation, for over 400,000 voters, was planned, organized and conducted in three and a half months, an unprecedentedly short time-frame. The successful conduct of the consultation under such pressure is a tribute to the dedication and hard work of United Nations staff, volunteers and concerned individuals from related organizations and agencies.

30. The Governments of Australia, Mozambique, Portugal and Canada made significant contributions in cash and/or in kind toward the conduct of the external vote; UNDP in Mozambique was also instrumental in facilitating the process. The United Nations Information Centre in Lisbon provided invaluable support not only for the external voting process in Portugal but in the translation and publication of United Nations public information materials which were used by UNAMET-Dili and other external voting locations.

31. The Secretary-General appointed a three-member international electoral commission to oversee the entire consultative process. Its tasks were: (a) to ensure that the procedures for voting, the registration process and the polling were conducted in accordance with the Agreement; and (b) to determine whether in its opinion the consultation had been able to provide an accurate reflection of the will of the people of East Timor. The commission began its work with the commencement of registration and continued through the conclusion of the vote count. On 4 September 1999 the commission issued its determination that the procedures for voting, the registration process and the polling had been conducted in accordance with the New York Agreements and that the popular consultation had provided an accurate reflection of the will of the people of East Timor.

32. Additional information on the popular consultation is available in the annex to this report and in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/1999/595, S/1999/705, S/1999/803, S/1999/862, and S/1999/1024).

B. Support for international observers

33. During the period under review, the Electoral Assistance Division provided coordination and support for international observers present for elections in Cambodia, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and South Africa. The largest of such observations was in Cambodia, where a Joint International Observer Group of some 505 observers was deployed throughout the country's 23 provinces. The demand for international observation is changing, however. In some Member States, domestic observer groups have begun to organize and assume an active election observation role. In some cases domestic observers have coordinated their work with international observers and/or organized training sessions with international groups. For example, a network of international and national observers observed the two phases of the May 1999 general elections in Nepal. The

increase in the number of domestic observer groups and their cooperation with international organizations are positive indications that national confidence in electoral processes is growing.

34. The most long-term observation project carried out by the United Nations during the biennium was organized at the request of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission. Based on a September 1998 request, the Director of the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a survey mission to Nigeria in October. As a result, the United Nations provided comprehensive and phased support to the Nigerian electoral process. A United Nations electoral assistance secretariat was established in December 1998 in order to provide logistical and methodological support to international observers deployed to observe the local, National Assembly and presidential elections held in December 1998, January 1999 and February 1999. In the post-election phase, and as requested, the United Nations is now providing assistance with election administration and civic education.

C. Technical assistance and advisory services

35. Over the past two years, the United Nations provided technical assistance in response to requests from 31 Member States: Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Djibouti, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. As in the past, assistance has covered such areas as election administration, budgeting, scheduling, voter registration, boundary delimitation and computerization. A new area of interest is the design of external voting procedures. With technical support and advice from the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP, Mexican experts recently prepared a study on options for the organization of external voting; Nicaraguan election experts have now begun discussions with them regarding appropriate strategies for the organization of external voting for Nicaragua.

IV. Reflections for future activity

36. In the early 1990s, electoral assistance activities were generally aimed at supporting efforts to organize a credible electoral process. Public attention often focused on a single electoral event, with little regard for the broader democratic process. Today, however, citizens in a growing number of countries seem to view their elections as viable, based on the high turnouts tabulated at registration and on voting days. Given the positive electoral experiences of many voting populations, the general level of confidence and trust in the process is rising. In many cases, elections have contributed significantly to national peace and stability, encouraging greater public participation in government and providing an effective and peaceful means for resolving differences. With the passage of time and the holding of several successful elections, each election is now viewed more as part of an ongoing process rather than as a single landmark event.

37. Given this change in public expectations and an attendant increase in national electoral capacity, demands for international assistance have also changed. The conduct of needs assessment missions will be more important now than ever, given the increasing diversity of needs expressed by election authorities and the growing options for the provision of international assistance. In this context, project design is becoming more sophisticated, aimed at particular needs which may be addressed in a phased approach or in a comprehensive assistance package over a specific time period. Each request must also be assessed with a view to the readiness of the recipient to incorporate and maintain the particular assistance to be provided. At the same time, the international community has recognized that a viable election may have short-lived results if the necessary socio-political and security conditions are not present. Needs assessment missions will therefore continue to be critical for determining the basic parameters for effective electoral assistance and identifying additional factors which colour the electoral landscape more indirectly. The conduct of the needs assessment mission is the first step in establishing the cooperative relationship between the United Nations and national election authorities which is essential for all forms of assistance.

38. The emphasis in earlier years on election observation is less pronounced today. The focus now is on improving electoral processes, strengthening established electoral institutions and creating networks of support among election administrators. Domestic groups have taken on the task of election observation in many countries. As a result, the international community will be called upon more frequently to assist with specific technical issues rather than to verify the legitimacy of an election. This shift marks the very positive close of an important phase of democratic electoral development in many countries.

39. For the United Nations, the need to coordinate electoral assistance is key. With many more organizations active in this field, and given the diversity of their projects, the Electoral Assistance Division is reinforcing its role as

coordinator of United Nations electoral assistance. In this context, the Division and UNDP are working closely to develop new and more effective mechanisms for cooperation. The technical and operational divisions of both must have clear lines of communication to ensure optimal service for Member States seeking assistance. Regular consultations with the regional bureaux of UNDP and the preparation of revised guidelines for electoral assistance will facilitate these efforts.

40. The United Nations will also continue to devise new forms of assistance that can provide an effective response to the evolving needs of Member States. Through collaboration with internal and external partners, new opportunities for electoral assistance will be made available via the Internet, CD-ROM formats and new forms of in-country advice. New areas for international collaboration and assistance include frameworks for external voting, local elections, long-term civic education programmes and expert technical reviews. Traditional forms of assistance will remain available, but new activities offer a wealth of opportunities and options for Member States seeking further to consolidate their efforts in democratization.

Annex

Summary of electoral assistance activities from 17 September 1997 to 30 September 1999

Albania

In August 1999 the United Nations received, through the UNDP office in Albania, a request for technical assistance related to the preparation of the voter registration lists. Local elections are scheduled for mid-2000. An officer from the Electoral Assistance Division and an electoral consultant travelled to the country at the end of September on a needs assessment mission and to assist in the formulation of a technical assistance project.

Armenia

Following the resignation of the President on 3 February 1998, the Government of Armenia on 9 February 1998 requested the Secretary-General to send United Nations observers to monitor the presidential elections on 16 March 1998. The United Nations informed the Government that it was unable to participate in the observation of the elections because of insufficient lead time. However, the United Nations agreed to provide limited technical assistance to the electoral process through its UNDP offices. The first round of presidential elections was held on 16 March 1998 and the second round on 30 March 1998.

On 23 March 1999 the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia requested the United Nations to send observers to monitor the elections for the National Assembly scheduled for 30 May 1999. On the basis of established guidelines and practices, the United Nations declined to send observers but agreed to the provision of technical assistance through the United Nations system. Based on previous experience and under project ARM/99/001, UNDP Armenia provided assistance in voter education, training, computerization of the voters' list and tabulation of the election results. In addition, UNDP provided logistical support to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) and organized regular coordination meetings with the donor community and international organizations supporting the electoral process. Parliamentary elections were held on 30 May 1999.

Azerbaijan

In July 1998 the Government of Azerbaijan invited the United Nations to observe the presidential elections on 11 October 1998. The focal point for electoral assistance activities replied that although the United Nations was not in a position to send observers, it could provide technical assistance, as appropriate, during and after the electoral process. No further action was taken.

Bangladesh

During 1998 UNDP continued to assist the Election Commission secretariat under project BGD/96/018, "Strengthening the Election Commission for improvement in the electoral process". The goal of the project was to strengthen the Commission's technical capacity for greater operational transparency. This included: (a) developing a voter registration system; (b) strengthening the Election Training Institute; and (c) developing a civic education programme.

Burkina Faso

In September 1998, the Government invited United Nations observers and requested logistical support for presidential elections on 15 November 1998. The United Nations was unable to fulfil the request due to insufficient lead time.

Cambodia

In a letter dated 2 April 1998, the Secretary-General accepted an invitation from the Royal Government of Cambodia to coordinate the activities of international observers throughout the entire electoral process. Such assistance was additional to a technical assistance project implemented by UNDP since 1997. The purpose was to provide complete assistance and support to all international observers. A United Nations electoral assistance secretariat (UNEAS) was established in May, with headquarters in Phnom Penh and four regional offices based in Phnom Penh,

Battambang, Siem Reap and Kampong Cham. On 1 June, a Joint International Observer Group (JIOG) was established with representatives of observer groups from Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the European Union. Long-term observers were deployed in some 11 provinces under the general coordinating structure of UNEAS. They were responsible for observing the registration process and the electoral campaign preceding the National Assembly elections held on 26 July 1998.

On election day, the JIOG totalled 505 observers (including 56 long-term observers) who covered the polling in Cambodia's 23 districts. The JIOG issued four press releases assessing the electoral process: one on 17 July expressing concern at the sudden increase in the number of national observers accredited by the National Electoral Commission; the second on 24 July assessing the overall pre-election process; the third on 27 July assessing the polling and counting processes; and the fourth on 29 July reinforcing the post-election statement. The activities of UNEAS were supported and made possible through cooperation with all United Nations entities and agencies represented in Cambodia and their respective headquarters (Office of the Secretary-General's Personal Representative in Cambodia, Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, UNDP, the Office of Project Services and UNV). UNEAS closed its operation on 15 August 1998.

Cameroon

In October 1997 UNDP received an invitation from the Government to observe the presidential elections scheduled for 12 October 1997. The Focal Point for Electoral Assistance instructed UNDP to inform the Government that, due to insufficient lead time, the United Nations was not in a position to send observers.

Central African Republic

Following a request from the Government for United Nations assistance in preparing and monitoring the elections scheduled for September 1998 and October 1999, the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission in February 1998. The mandate of the mission was to evaluate the possible role of the United Nations in assisting with the holding of free, fair and credible elections within the proposed peacekeeping operation. The mission submitted a report with recommendations for consideration by the focal point and the Security Council.

On 27 March 1998 the Security Council adopted resolution 1159 (1998) establishing the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). Its initial mandate included providing "advice and technical support to the national electoral bodies regarding the electoral code and plans for the conduct of the legislative elections scheduled for August/September 1998". Accordingly, the electoral component of MINURCA was established in May 1998.

Subsequently, with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1201 (1998) of 15 October 1998, the mandate of MINURCA was extended to include the transport of electoral materials and equipment to and from selected sites, ensuring the security of materials and of international election observers, and the conduct of a limited but reliable international observation of the two rounds of elections. The first and second rounds of the legislative elections were held on 22 November and 13 December 1998, respectively.

On 26 February 1999 the Security Council adopted resolution 1230 (1999) authorizing the extension of the mandate of MINURCA and authorizing MINURCA to play a supportive role in the conduct of the presidential elections. As a result, the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a mission in March 1999 to prepare an operational plan for MINURCA's role in those elections. An expert on registration was included in the team. In April 1999, the electoral component of MINURCA was re-established and resumed its operations. Presidential elections were held on 19 September 1999.

The electoral activities of MINURCA have been described in more detail in the reports of the Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 28 of the present report.

In addition to the activities of the electoral component of MINURCA, the United Nations provided technical assistance to the electoral authorities for the preparation of the legislative and presidential elections under the provisions of UNDP project CAF/98/004, established in July 1998.

Colombia

In May 1999 the Government of Colombia requested the United Nations to consider providing assistance to improve the current electoral system. The United Nations

has agreed to send a needs assessment mission to the country in order to evaluate the possibilities for such assistance.

Congo

In February 1999 the Government of the Congo requested the United Nations to provide electoral assistance for the upcoming elections and to conduct a needs assessment mission. In response, the focal point for electoral assistance requested clarification as to the type of electoral assistance envisaged and the proposed electoral calendar. No further action was taken.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In October 1998 the Government, through UNDP, requested United Nations funding to undertake an electoral census in preparation for a referendum and general elections to be held in 1999. The request was referred to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for action, since no prior population census existed.

Djibouti

Following a request from the Government of Djibouti in July 1998, UNDP funded a national legal consultant to undertake a comprehensive study of the judicial framework in connection with the 1999 presidential elections.

Subsequently, in February 1999 the Government of Djibouti invited the United Nations to send two observers for the presidential elections of 9 April 1999. The focal point for electoral assistance replied that the United Nations was unable to send observers owing to insufficient lead time, but that UNDP would provide limited technical assistance to the electoral authorities.

El Salvador

In September 1997, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of El Salvador requested the United Nations to assist, in cooperation with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico, in reviewing and improving the electoral system, in preparation for the 1999 elections. In response to that request, in October 1997 the United Nations sent an officer from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs/ Division for Governance, Public Administration and Finance and a team of electoral experts to conduct a study of the current electoral system. The team briefed the President and the Political Commission of the Legislative Assembly, and the findings of the mission were analysed and discussed at a one-day workshop held on 17 November, with the participation of political parties, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the donor community. The mission presented a report upon the completion of its assignment.

During 1998, the United Nations continued to provide support to the National Civil Registration System in the establishment of an ID card system for the country.

Equatorial Guinea

In May 1998 the Government of Equatorial Guinea sent a request to the United Nations for the coordination of international observers for the legislative elections to be held in November 1998, as well as assistance in mobilizing the necessary resources. The United Nations indicated its willingness to send a needs assessment mission to the country as soon as possible, to review the status of preparations for the elections and to assess the political situation in the country. No reply was received from the Government and the elections were later postponed to 1999.

In January 1999 the Government of Equatorial Guinea invited the United Nations to send observers for the legislative elections to be held on 7 March 1999. The United Nations was unable to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

Ethiopia

In April 1999 the United Nations received, through UNDP, a request for assistance in the preparation of the national elections scheduled for 2000. UNDP is currently providing the requested assistance.

Gabon

In July 1998, the Government of Gabon invited the United Nations to send a delegation of observers to the presidential elections to be held on 6 December 1998. The United Nations informed the Government of its willingness to send a mission to assess the political conditions and to recommend to the electoral authorities the most appropriate assistance. The lateness of the reply from the Government precluded the sending of a mission.

Guatemala

In May 1999 the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala invited the United Nations to observe the general elections scheduled to take place in November 1999. The United Nations replied that its involvement in the elections would be as follows: through the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development, the Electoral Assistance Division would contribute to the electoral reform mentioned in the Peace Agreements. In addition, the United Nations would send a technical mission to Guatemala to plan the observation of the elections by the international community. As in the past, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) would also provide limited logistical support to the electoral process.

Guinea

In January 1998 the Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations sent the Secretary-General a document indicating the financial resources needed for the organization of presidential elections in 1998. The focal point for electoral activities replied that although the United Nations was not in a position to provide financial assistance, it would consider providing technical assistance should the Government so request. In May 1998, following a request from the Government, the United Nations sent a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division to conduct a needs assessment mission. The officer submitted a report including recommendations for future involvement.

On 9 July 1998 a special consultations meeting on Guinea took place at United Nations Headquarters with the participation of a delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea and representatives of UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs. It was agreed, *inter alia*, that the United Nations could, if requested, provide technical assistance and coordination of donor contributions. In September and in December 1998 an officer of the Electoral Assistance Division conducted two technical assistance missions in Guinea under UNDP project GUI/98/005/A/2D/31. In December two consultants were sent to provide technical assistance to the High Council for Electoral Affairs.

In additional to technical assistance, in November 1998 the Government of Guinea invited the United Nations to observe the presidential elections to be held on 14 December 1998. The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

Guinea-Bissau

In December 1998, the United Nations dispatched a multidisciplinary mission to Guinea-Bissau to assess the overall situation in the country and make recommendations on possible United Nations assistance in the implementation of the Abuja Peace Agreement and to support Guinea-Bissau's post-conflict peace-building and recovery efforts. The Security Council, in resolution 1216 (1998) of 21 December 1998, requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations to the Council on a possible role of the United Nations in the process of peace and reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau, including the early establishment of arrangements for liaison between the United Nations and the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG).

Following the publication of the report of the Secretary-General of 17 March 1999 (S/1999/294) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the Security Council adopted resolution 1233 (1999) of 6 April 1999, supporting, *inter alia*, the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a post-conflict Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) headed by a Representative of the Secretary-General (S/1999/232) which would provide the political framework and leadership for harmonizing and integrating the activities of the United Nations system in Guinea-Bissau during the transitional period leading up to general and presidential elections and would facilitate, in close cooperation with the parties concerned, ECOWAS and ECOMOG, as well as other national and international partners, the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. Mr. Samuel Nana-Sinkam was appointed Representative of the Secretary-General in April 1999 and an electoral expert was selected by the Electoral Assistance Division to advise him on electoral matters. The electoral activities of UNOGBIS have been described in more detail in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/1999/741 and S/1999/1015).

In addition, at the request of the Government, the United Nations is providing, through UNDP project GBS/97/007, technical assistance for the various stages of the electoral process and will be coordinating the international observation of the elections. A technical team, comprising a chief technical adviser and experts on electoral informatics, logistics, registration and civic education, has been assisting the National Electoral Commission in preparing the elections scheduled for 28 November 1999.

Guyana

The United Nations provided technical assistance to the Guyana Elections Commission from March 1996 until December 1997 under the provisions of UNDP project GUY/96/001. In August 1997, an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to the country to provide further advice on the planning and organization of the elections.

In September 1997 the Government invited the United Nations to send observers for the elections. In addition, the Elections Commission requested the United Nations to coordinate and support the activities of international observers invited to follow the elections. In response, the United Nations agreed to send a United Nations electoral expert under the provisions of the technical assistance project mentioned above. Elections for the Parliament and the Regional Democratic Council were held on 15 December 1997.

Haiti

In April 1999, a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission to Haiti at the request of the Provisional Electoral Commission (CEP), and submitted a report. In May 1999, UNDP project HAI/99/008 was established and two electoral consultants were deployed to assist the CEP in preparing for the upcoming elections. In addition, UNVs will be deployed to the *départments* to work with the relevant CEP officials. The first round of legislative elections is scheduled for 7 November and the second round for 12 December 1999.

Honduras

In September 1997 the National Electoral Tribunal of Honduras requested the United Nations to provide technical assistance for the preparation of the elections to be held that year. In response, in October 1997, an officer from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs conducted a needs assessment mission to the country. In accordance with the mission's recommendations, the "Office of Support for Diplomatic Electoral Observation" was created to assist in the coordination of international observers present for the presidential, legislative and mayoral elections held on 30 November 1997.

Indonesia

In February 1999 the Government of Indonesia and UNDP signed a technical assistance document under which UNDP was entrusted with the coordination of international technical assistance provided for the preparation of the general elections held on 7 June 1999. An officer of the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to the country at that time to review the assistance to be provided.

Kyrgyzstan

In October 1998 the Government of Kyrgyzstan invited the United Nations to observe the conduct of a referendum on the introduction of amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic scheduled for 17 October 1998. The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

In March 1999 the Kyrgyz electoral authorities requested the United Nations to coordinate both United Nations and donor assistance for the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2000. Accordingly, in August 1999 the Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs assessment mission to determine the type of United Nations assistance that could be provided. The mission has submitted a report.

Lesotho

Following a request from the Government in early 1997, the United Nations provided technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho under the provisions of UNDP project LES/007/A/07/31, "Technical support to the IEC". Two experts in electoral planning and logistics assisted the Commission in preparing for the parliamentary elections held on 23 May 1998. In addition, the United Nations, through UNDP, assisted in the coordination of the activities of international observers invited by the Government of Lesotho.

During 1999 the Electoral Assistance Division conducted two assessment missions to Lesotho to ascertain the needs of the Interim Political Authority and the IEC in preparing for parliamentary elections in 2000.

Malawi

At the end of July 1998 an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission to Malawi to discuss possible United Nations assistance to the newly appointed Electoral Commission. On 12 August 1998, the Commission formally requested United Nations technical assistance for the 1999 elections, as well as coordination of international observers invited to monitor the elections.

In November 1998 the United Nations sent an electoral expert to provide logistical assistance to the Commission under the provisions of UNDP project MLW/96/002. On the basis of an additional request, the United Nations also assisted the Electoral Commission in putting together a team of high-level consultants to coordinate the observation of the 15 June 1999 presidential and National Assembly elections.

Mauritius

In November 1997 UNDP informed the focal point for electoral assistance that the Government of Mauritius had requested technical assistance for the review and reform of electoral rules and procedures. In February 1998 the United Nations sent a senior adviser from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to conduct a needs assessment mission. At the recommendation of the mission, a high-level group of electoral experts was sent to the country to observe the by-elections held on 5 April 1998 with the purpose of undertaking a comprehensive study of the procedures in place and providing advice on improvements to the electoral process.

Mexico

During 1998 and 1999 the United Nations continued to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities in Mexico, and a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted several technical missions to the country. Under the provisions of UNDP project MEX/94/001, a training manual on electoral observation for domestic observer groups, available on CD-ROM, was completed. A separate project, MEX/98/006, "Strengthening of the democratic culture, the electoral process and governability", was established, under which conferences on expatriate voting and on the participation of children and youth in electoral processes were organized. A new project, MEX/99/005, is being established in connection with the elections scheduled for 2000.

Mozambique

In February 1999 the Government of Mozambique requested the United Nations to coordinate external aid from the donor community to the electoral authorities in connection with the 1999 general elections. In March 1999, a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission to the country and assisted in the revision of a UNDP project which is currently being implemented with the cooperation of the Office for Project Services.

Nepal

In February 1999, the Elections Commission of Nepal requested the United Nations to provide coordination and support for international electoral observers for the May 1999 general elections. Based on a positive assessment of basic conditions and feasibility, the United Nations, in close coordination with UNDP, established a United Nations electoral assistance secretariat (UNEAS) in Nepal. Apart from the coordinator, UNEAS was staffed exclusively by Nepalese experts. UNEAS coordinated the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), consisting of 63 observers (31 teams) of 13 different nationalities. Throughout the electoral process, special efforts were made to coordinate observation activities with Nepalese observer groups. Owing to security considerations, elections were conducted in two phases, both observed by a network of international and national observers: during the first phase on 3 May 1999, 51 out of 91 constituencies were observed by JIOG, while the national groups were deployed to all constituencies. A statement, formulated jointly by JIOG and the national observer groups, was issued on 4 May indicating that "voting ... was generally orderly and peaceful and took place in a positive atmosphere". During the second phase of elections on 17 May, 55 out of 109 constituencies were observed by JIOG and a statement issued on 18 May noted that "the polling process was, on the whole, free, fair, peaceful and orderly at the polling stations [visited by the international observers]". With the completion of the project, UNEAS in Nepal was closed on 31 May 1999.

Nicaragua

In February 1998 the Government of Nicaragua invited the United Nations to provide observers for the regional elections scheduled for 1 March 1998 in the Atlantic Coast province of Nicaragua. The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

Following another request from the electoral authorities of Nicaragua (*Consejo Supremo Electoral*) in June 1998, the United Nations conducted a mission, headed by an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division, to assess the possibility of establishing a UNDP project, "The Vote of Nicaraguans residing abroad". The mission submitted a report.

Niger

In August 1998 the Government of Niger requested technical assistance for local elections scheduled for 22 November 1998. The elections were later postponed to 1999 and no further action was taken.

In June 1999 the Government requested, through UNDP, United Nations assistance for the preparation of the presidential and legislative elections now scheduled for 17 October 1999. The Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission in July 1999 and assisted in the preparation of a technical assistance project, under UNDP NER/97/001, which includes the provision of technical assistance to the Electoral Commission, as well as coordination of international observers.

Nigeria

On his assumption of power following General Abacha's sudden death in June 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar announced on 20 July 1998 that the transition to democratic civilian rule would be completed by 29 May 1999. He subsequently outlined a timetable for elections to that end. On 30 September, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria formally requested the United Nations to provide comprehensive assistance to the electoral process in Nigeria. The United Nations responded positively to this request and agreed to play a coordinating role in the following areas: (a) the overall coordination of election-related activities and contributions from international donors; (b) the provision of a long-term technical electoral adviser to the INEC; (c) the coordination and support of long- and short-term electoral observers.

Following a United Nations assessment mission in September/October and a start-up mission in November, a United Nations senior technical adviser took up his assignment at the end of November. Close coordination was established among the various international organizations providing technical assistance to the electoral process. Donor support was mobilized for the United Nations operation, as well as for support to the INEC through the United Nations umbrella mechanism. A memorandum of agreement was signed by the European Commission and the United Nations in view of joint efforts to support the Nigerian electoral process. A United Nations electoral assistance secretariat (UNEAS) structure was established in December with direct staffing contributions from UNVs. UNV deployed 12 international and 12 national UNVs in mid-December as an advance team to establish the regional structures of UNEAS.

Local council elections were held on 5 December 1998, with nine political parties participating. Independent observers assessed the electoral process positively, despite a number of technical problems. Elections for governors and State assemblies took place on 9 January 1999, elections for Nigeria's National Assembly on 20 February and presidential elections on 27 February 1999. The new civilian President was sworn in on 26 May 1999.

As part of the mandate of UNEAS, logistical and methodological support were provided to international observers deployed to observe the National Assembly and the presidential elections. Under the United Nations umbrella, 123 electoral observers from the European Union, Canada, Norway and Japan visited a total of 845 polling stations in the 36 Nigerian states, including the Federal Capital Territory.

After the elections, UNEAS maintained a small team of experts to monitor electoral developments during the period leading up to the transfer of power to civilian rule and to study the possible modalities of long-term United Nations assistance to the democratization process. Three areas of post-electoral assistance activities have been initiated: (a) a joint international assessment of lessons learned and identification of new areas of assistance to INEC; (b) a media campaign through INEC; and (c) the design and implementation of a long-term civic education project. The Electoral Assistance Division will continue to coordinate post-electoral assistance activities, in close cooperation with UNDP's governance programmes in Nigeria.

Pakistan

Under the provisions of UNDP project PAK/96/011, a senior adviser from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs conducted two missions to Pakistan in 1998 in order to provide advice for the development of a project which would include the following assistance: (a) improvement of voter turnout, with a focus on women; (b) computerization of the electoral rolls; (c) capacity-building at the Electoral Commission; (d) training programmes. The project began in 1999.

Sao Tome and Principe

In October 1998 the Government invited the United Nations to send observers to the legislative elections scheduled for 8 November 1998. The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

South Africa

In August 1998 the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa requested the United Nations to provide technical assistance to the Commission and to coordinate international observers invited for the general elections to be held in 1999. Under the provisions of UNDP project SAF/97/031, the United Nations provided two experts in logistics and communications who assisted the Commission until the end of January 1999.

In February 1999 the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a mission to South Africa to assess the status of preparations for the elections, and in April 1999 the United Nations established an electoral assistance secretariat (UNEAS). UNEAS coordinated 128 international observers who formed the Joint International Observers Group (JIOG). JIOG included 58 observers from the Organization of African Unity (drawn from 25 countries), 15 from the Southern African Development Community (from 9 countries) and 55 observers from smaller organizations and individual States.

The United Nations is currently planning post-electoral assistance for the Electoral Commission.

Tajikistan

From April to mid-August 1998 an electoral expert identified by the Electoral Assistance Division was recruited by the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) to provide advice to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at whose request the Electoral Assistance Division in February-March 1999 sent a senior consultant to undertake an exploratory mission to advise the Tajik authorities, UNMOT and OSCE on the conditions and options for international involvement in the holding of elections. The exploratory mission submitted a report recommending further action.

In May 1999 a mission to evaluate the adequacy of electoral laws and regulations for the electoral process in Tajikistan took place and submitted a report. A second mission to assess the electoral environment took place in August 1999.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

In January 1998 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia received a request from the Minister of Justice for an expert on electoral law and electoral systems to assist in finalizing the drafting of the electoral law. Accordingly, the Electoral Assistance Division contracted a legal expert to assist the country's electoral authorities in reviewing the final draft of the electoral law. The consultant submitted a report upon the completion of the mission.

Togo

In March 1998 the Government of Togo sent two separate requests to the United Nations for electoral assistance: the first for material and financial support to prepare for the upcoming elections, and a second for observers to monitor the presidential elections on 21 June 1998. The United Nations replied that, owing to the short lead time, the Organization was not able to send observers for the elections. However, the United Nations, through UNDP, provided limited technical assistance to the National Electoral Commission in the form of logistical support and civic education.

In March 1999 the United Nations received a request from the Government of Togo for two observers for the legislative elections scheduled to take place on 21 March

(first round) and 4 April 1999 (second round). The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

Uganda

In June 1999 the Government of Uganda requested UNDP to coordinate donor resources in support of civic education in connection with the referendum on the system of governance to be held in 2000. The United Nations agreed to provide technical support to the referendum and to coordinate donor activities.

Ukraine

In September 1999 the Government of Ukraine invited the United Nations to observe the presidential elections scheduled for 31 October 1999. The United Nations informed the Government that it was unable to send observers owing to the short lead time.

United Republic of Tanzania

In May 1999 the Tanzanian National Electoral Commission requested the United Nations to provide support for the general elections scheduled for October 2000. The Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission to the country in August 1999 to assess the possibilities for United Nations electoral assistance and has submitted a report recommending further action.

Venezuela

In April 1998 an officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs conducted a mission to Venezuela to assess the possibilities for United Nations support to the National Electoral Council.

In October 1998 the Government of Venezuela invited the United Nations to observe the presidential elections to be held on 6 December 1998. The United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers owing to insufficient lead time.

Yemen

In 1998, under the provisions of UNDP project YEM/96/002 (still active), the UNDP Resident Representative requested the Electoral Assistance Division to conduct a needs assessment mission in order to evaluate the capacity of the Supreme Elections Committee and recommend to UNDP and to the donor community possibilities for strengthening its capacity in view of the presidential and local elections in 1999 and legislative elections in 2001. Accordingly, in December 1998 and February 1999, an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted two separate missions to the country. Starting in February 1999 an electoral consultant was recruited to assist UNDP in electoral matters. The presidential elections were held on 23 September 1999.

Zambia

In December 1998 the Electoral Commission of Zambia requested UNDP to provide it with support in the form of logistics and materials needed for the conduct of local elections to be held on 30 December 1998. Accordingly, UNDP set up a trust fund to channel funds provided by the donor community for that purpose.

In June 1999 the United Nations received a request from the Government of Zambia for support for the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in 2001. The Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs assessment mission in August 1999 and had submitted a report recommending further action.

East Timor

On 5 May 1999 the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal signed an agreement on the question of East Timor. As part of the agreement, the Secretary-General was requested to put to the East Timorese people, both inside and outside East Timor, for their consideration and acceptance or rejection through a popular consultation on the basis of a direct, secret and universal ballot, a proposed constitutional framework for special autonomy for East Timor within the unitary Republic of Indonesia.

In response to this request, the United Nations Mission for East Timor (UNAMET) was established in mid-May with the purpose of organizing and conducting the consultation. Some 200 registration centres were identified in the territory of East Timor; external registration centres were established

elsewhere in Indonesia (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar, Ujung Pandang) and in Australia (Sydney, Darwin, Perth, Melbourne), Lisbon, Maputo, Macau and New York. The United Nations utilized the services of the Australian Electoral Commission for the balloting in Australia and of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for all other external sites.

The Governments of Indonesia and Portugal agreed to a quota of 50 official observers for each side. Over 1,200 observers from non-governmental organizations and Governments were accredited by UNAMET. An official code of conduct for observers was approved and distributed.

Registration began on 16 July and closed on 6 August in East Timor and on 8 August at external sites. The computerized registration lists were posted for review and challenges began on 17 August for five days. The vote took place on 30 August 1999 and the results were announced on 4 September 1999.

Netherlands Antilles

In September 1999 the United Nations received through the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations a request for assistance to the Sint Maarten Referendum Committee in the preparation and execution of a referendum to be held in late 1999 on the future constitutional status of Sint Maarten. The United Nations has agreed to assist the Referendum Committee and the Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division will travel to Sint Maarten in late October 1999.

Western Sahara

An officer from the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to Western Sahara in February 1998 to assess the status of preparations for the referendum scheduled for December 1998. A report was submitted to the focal point. No further action was taken.

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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Recent activities of the follow-up mechanism to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies	3–7	2
III.	Preparations for the Benin Conference of New or Restored Democracies	8–11	2
IV.	The United Nations and the international conferences of new or restored democracies: an interim review	12–31	3
	A. Developments within the framework of the international conferences of new or restored democracies	13–23	3
	B. Other developments in building democracy	24–31	5
V.	Observations and recommendations	32–38	6

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions 50/133 of 20 December 1995, 51/31 of 6 December 1996, 52/18 of 21 November 1997, and 53/31 of 23 November 1998, the General Assembly welcomed the four reports of the Secretary-General on the ways in which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/50/332 and Corr.1, A/51/512, A/52/513, A/53/554 and Corr.1). The Assembly commended the activities undertaken at the request of Governments to support the efforts to consolidate democracy, as reflected in the Secretary-General's four reports. The Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States in their efforts towards democratization.

2. In its resolution 53/31, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its fifty-fourth session, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It describes the activities that have taken place in 1998-1999 in the follow-up process to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (see A/53/554 and Corr.1, chap. II). It also looks more generally at the efforts of the United Nations system in that field, reviews the overall process of democratization and the role that the international conferences of new or restored democracies and the United Nations have played in that global process.

II. Recent activities of the follow-up mechanism to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

3. In its resolution 51/31, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, Member States and appropriate specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations to cooperate in the holding of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development. The Conference was held in Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997. As described in my report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session (A/53/554 and Corr.1), the Conference was successful in bringing together participants from all parts of the international community and civil society and recommended that a mechanism, including representatives of Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, should be established to follow up on its results.

4. Since the Conference, the Government of Romania (the current chair of the international conferences) has continued to play a leading role in the follow-up process. The participants in the follow-up mechanism are representatives from interested countries, in particular those involved in organizing the international conferences of new or restored democracies (Benin, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Romania), the United Nations system, academia and non-governmental organizations. The main purpose of the follow-up mechanism is to implement the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference, to plan for the coming conferences and to assist in promoting communication on and better understanding of the challenges and prospects of democratization.

5. The follow-up mechanism continued to meet in 1998 and 1999 in New York. A third "democracy forum" was organized at the United Nations on 22 March 1999. The theme of the meeting was the development of democracy in Albania and a presentation was made by the Speaker of the Albanian Parliament. Members of permanent missions, Secretariat staff and representatives of non-governmental organizations were invited to participate.

6. The Government of Romania hosted an expert meeting in Bucharest on 17 and 18 May 1999 as part of the follow-up process. The meeting discussed the United Nations assistance to Governments in the area of democratization and good governance; the analysis of the list of indicators for the evaluation of national progress in strengthening democracy; and the detailed preparations for the Fourth International Conference, to be held in Benin in December 2000.

7. At the meeting in May 1999, Romania also introduced the first draft of a code of democratic conduct. The follow-up mechanism discussed the draft and amended it. As requested by the Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, the revised draft was published as an official document of the General Assembly on 27 July 1999 (A/54/178, annex).

III. Preparations for the Benin Conference of New or Restored Democracies

8. In its resolution 53/31, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to promote democratization and

to make additional efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, noting with satisfaction that the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies would be held in Cotonou in the year 2000 and stressing the importance of support by Member States, the United Nations system, the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations for the holding of the Fourth International Conference.

9. In June 1999, the President of Benin established a national preparatory committee for the planning and organization of the Conference. It was decided that the theme of the Conference would be "Democracy, Peace, Security and Development". A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) expert team visited Cotonou from 23 to 28 August 1999 to help the Government of Benin prepare a project document on the Conference. The initial plans were approved in September 1999 by both UNDP and the host Government.

10. The Government of Benin intends to organize, in cooperation with international organizations, interested partners and other African countries, four preparatory meetings in Africa that will focus on the theme of the Conference. Two special events — a forum for youth and a civil society forum — will be held immediately preceding the Conference. Regional conferences or seminars will also be organized on lessons learned about democratic transition in various parts of the world.

11. Many donor countries, United Nations agencies and international organizations (such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Organization of la Francophonie) have already committed themselves to contribute substantively to the preparatory process and the organization of the Conference. The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies is scheduled for the first week of December 2000. The Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations will be the focal point in New York for the coordination of the preparatory process, assisted by the follow-up mechanism.

IV. The United Nations and the international conferences of new or restored democracies: an interim review

12. The countries that consider themselves new or restored democracies have now been meeting for 12 years. For the first time, an African country will be the host of the international conference. At the dawn of the third millennium, and with Africa completing the cycle of conferences to be held on the four continents, it is timely to assess the overall impact of the movement on the process of global democratization, in particular in view of the preparatory process for the Benin Conference in December 2000.

A. Developments within the framework of the international conferences of new or restored democracies

1. International conferences

13. The first international conference was held in Manila in 1988, followed by conferences held in Managua in 1994 and in Bucharest in 1997. The number of countries attending the conferences has increased from 13 in Manila to some 80 in Bucharest. During the period of the general debate in the General Assembly, two additional ministerial meetings took place in New York as part of the follow-up mechanism, the first in September 1996 and the second in September 1998. The reports and documents of the three conferences were made available to the international community. More efforts could be undertaken to distribute them widely among delegations, governmental officials, scholars, journalists and non-governmental organizations, since the results of the conferences are still not known to the public at large.

2. The reports of the Secretary-General, General Assembly resolutions and other official documents

14. Prior to the present report, four reports of the Secretary-General on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies have been issued (see para. 1 above). Five resolutions have been adopted by the General Assembly, at its forty-ninth to fifty-third sessions. Other United Nations documents have been issued under the same item, most recently the Code of Democratic Conduct (A/54/178, annex). In addition, on 20 December 1996, my predecessor issued a companion volume to his report of 18 October 1996 (A/51/512), which was later published as an agenda for democratization (see A/51/761). It has been distributed widely and is still by far the most well-known of the reports of the Secretary-General on the subject.

3. Inventory of the activities of the United Nations system

15. The Secretariat has conducted two comprehensive reviews of ways and mechanisms by which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/30 of 7 December 1994. The 1995 review was undertaken through interviews that encouraged United Nations departments and agencies to reflect on their role in democracy-building (the results of the study were published in the report of the Secretary-General of 7 August 1995 (A/50/332 and Corr.1)). The 1998 review elicited written responses to a letter sent to departments and agencies by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. In the preparatory process, the Advisory Committee on Coordination discussed the matter and agreed to designate focal points who would facilitate the responses and participate in the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General of 29 October 1998 on new or restored democracies (A/53/554 and Corr.1).

16. It seems beneficial to conduct a periodic evaluation of the work of United Nations departments and agencies in the field of democratization. Enough time should be left between reviews, however, to let new developments evolve. In the interim, efforts will be made to engage departments and agencies more deeply in sharing their experiences in democracy-building, for instance, through joint seminars and projects.

4. The creation of the follow-up mechanism to the international conferences

17. The creation of the follow-up mechanism, as discussed in more detail in section II of this report, was an innovative idea that brought Governments, the United Nations system, academia and civil society organizations together to implement the objectives of the Bucharest Conference and to plan for the Benin Conference. Since its inception, members of the follow-up mechanism have held a series of meetings to advance concrete projects, reporting their results to the General Assembly. The mechanism is open-ended and transparent, welcoming new members. It is hoped that it will facilitate preparations for the Benin Conference in 2000.

5. Seminars and forums

18. A first civil society forum was held at the Conference in Bucharest in September 1997. A summary of the forum, entitled "The Role of Civil Society in the Process of Democratization", is contained in the report *Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development* (Bucharest, 1997), a publication sponsored by UNDP. This type of civil society forum will be repeated and expanded at the Benin Conference.

19. In addition, separate democracy forums have been held during sessions of the General Assembly in New York. The forums have facilitated discussions and allowed heads of State, parliamentarians and other eminent personalities to express their views and to share experience relevant to democratization. Other seminars and workshops have also been held in order to assist in the preparation process for the international conferences.

6. Democracy Web site and networking

20. The follow-up mechanism agreed in 1998 that a special United Nations Web site on democratization and good governance should be established. UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat subsequently established inter-linked sites within their home pages.[1] The sites will be further developed in order to fulfil their role in informing users of the reports, events and projects contemplated or completed under the umbrella of the follow-up mechanism.

21. The discussions in the conferences, forums and seminars, as well as in the General Assembly, have engaged many politicians, diplomats, governmental officials, international civil servants, scholars and representatives of non-governmental organizations in joint projects and deliberations. Electronic networks of the "friends of democracy" have been created. A group of practitioners and scholars from Finland, Romania and the United Kingdom established the Network Institute for Global Democratization in 1998. This virtual institute meets and operates through the Internet to promote open debate and concrete projects on democratization. Such electronic networking is expected to spread in the coming years.

7. New concepts, ideas and initiatives

22. A viable international movement should be able to create ideas, concepts and approaches, eventually leading to their concrete application, as well as to provoke discussion, even on controversial themes. A much debated document has been my predecessor's proposal for an agenda for democratization (see A/51/761). Its call for the democratization of international relations and the United Nations has provoked strong reactions. Other themes, such as the contribution of civil society and private sector to the

democratization process, have broadened the scope of debate on the matter.

23. Other concepts in the reports of the Secretary-General have been a comprehensive notion of democratization as a process — a goal to be achieved rather than a model to be imposed, the discussion of the role of women in furthering democratization and a proposal that a joint "democratization and governance agenda" could provide an opportunity to bridge a gap between the development and peace agendas of the United Nations. The reports of the three conferences as well as the reports of the Secretary-General have provided many other recommendations both as policy suggestions and guidelines for operations. The monitoring of their implementation since the follow-up mechanism was instituted in 1998 has given it a more practical character.

B. Other developments in building democracy

24. Many developments other than those directly related to new or restored democracies have taken place both within the United Nations and outside the Organization during the same period, considerably strengthening the overall process of democratization in the world.

25. Within the United Nations, a number of resolutions or declarations have been adopted in connection with various aspects of democratization. At its 57th meeting, on 27 April 1999, the Human Rights Commission adopted resolution 1999/57, entitled "Promotion of the right to democracy". Every second year, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution on electoral assistance based on the Secretary-General's report on enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections. As early as 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna examined the linkages between democracy, development and human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action[2] stated that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

26. Other international organizations have also taken measures or supported norms, guidelines and legal instruments in the field of democracy. In 1997 the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted a Universal Declaration on Democracy that set out the basic principles of democracy and the elements and standards for the exercise of democratic government. Among international institutes, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, based in Stockholm, has worked on many aspects of democratization. At the regional level, such institutes as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Unit for Promotion of Democracy of the Organization of American States have been established. At the national level, there has also been a growth of national institutes or research centres devoted to promoting or studying democracy and its many components.

27. The body of academic literature on democracy has been growing. Over recent years there has been a most lively debate on the so-called "democratic peace", that is, that democracies rarely go to war against each other and have low levels of internal violence compared with non-democracies. Another debate deals with the linkages between development and democracy, including the question of whether a democratic government promotes economic growth and development more effectively than other forms of government.

28. The concept of governance is also very much related to democracy. In my report of 21 October 1997 to the General Assembly on new or restored democracies (A/52/513), I stated that all the principles of good governance also reflected the fundamental principles of a democratic society. The programmes of governance within the United Nations system are greatly expanding. More than 50 per cent of UNDP programmes, for instance, are already devoted to governance and related projects, a trend that is likely to continue in the future.

29. The rapid waves of democratic transformations that occurred in the 1970s, 1980s and in particular in the early 1990s have levelled off. During recent years the democratic process has been consolidated, including continuous assistance by the international community to democratization and governance, as well as the emergence of new initiatives for international norms supporting democratization in various parts of the world. The continuation of global democratization is not necessarily assured, however. In a most timely initiative, the Summit of the Organization of African Unity in Algiers in July 1999 decided that leaders of military regimes would no longer be accepted at summit meetings of the Organization (decision AHG/Dec.142 (XXXV) (see A/54/424)).

30. The importance of the international conferences of new or restored democracies has been as a forum for creating policies and norms. The Conferences are the most visible manifestation of an open-ended process that brings together government representatives, United Nations officials, scholars and non-governmental organizations.

31. Other initiatives are also under way for the promotion of democratization. For instance, the World-wide Movement for Democracy held its first conference in New Delhi in February 1999 and the Emerging Democracies Forum met in Sana'a in June 1999. It is hoped that the Benin Conference will discuss the future direction and priorities of the international conferences of new or restored democracies and will examine imaginative ways and means to cooperate with other initiatives to strengthen democratic transformation throughout the world.

V. Observations and recommendations

32. In my report of 13 April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), I argued that democratization helped to guarantee political rights, protect economic freedoms and create an environment where peace and development could flourish. In my progress report of 25 September 1999 on the implementation of the recommendations in the Africa report (S/1999/1008), I once again stressed the links between democratization, political rights, economic freedoms and development. The two reports reflect the interest of the United Nations, Governments and civil society in addressing the causes of conflict and in promoting development and the process of democratization in Africa as a priority concern for the international community.

33. In view of the heightened interest in promoting the success of democracy in Africa, the Benin Conference planned for 2000 — the first worldwide ministerial meeting on the African continent on the subject — has the potential to offer not only a global platform for the strengthening of democratic transformation, but also a welcome opportunity to draw attention to democratic experience and its prospects and challenges in Africa.

34. In that light, it is proposed that:

Recommendation 1

All segments of international, regional and national communities should be encouraged to contribute to the Benin Conference, including Governments, the United Nations system, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the media. A special effort should be made to support public relations efforts to publicize the event widely and to mobilize substantial participation in the events organized under the umbrella of the Conference through, for example, the participation of Governments in the Conference, of parliamentarians in the forum for parliamentarians and of non-governmental organizations in the civil society and youth forums.

Recommendation 2

Besides the yearly debate in the General Assembly on the item concerning support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, Member States may wish to give their comments and observations on the review and suggestions contained in the present report (in particular in sections IV and V) and, more importantly, on their own experiences and "lessons learned" as new, restored or established democracies and/or as donors supporting democratic institutions with projects in other countries or regions. Those comments and observations would then be assembled and presented to the General Assembly and the Benin Conference for further action.

35. The inventory of the assistance given by the United Nations system to Governments to promote new or restored democracies, mentioned in section IV, has been useful. Its frequency should, however, be adjusted to serve the needs of the international community better. Accordingly, I propose that:

Recommendation 3

The inventory of assistance given by the United Nations system to Governments to strengthen new or restored democracies should be conducted every third or fourth year, or in years preceding the holding of future conferences of new or restored democracies.

36. The international conferences of new or restored democracies are part of a growing trend indicating that the process of democratization is a global phenomenon. New and fragile democracies still face very difficult challenges and even periodic regressions, however. During recent years it has been noted that even established democracies continue to face challenges in the response of their societies to problems such as violent crime, discrimination, corruption, the manipulation of public opinion and inefficiencies in the public sector and in governance. Consequently, while assistance to new or restored democracies should continue and increase in scope and magnitude, debate about the measures to be taken by established democracies to address the multifaceted challenges of globalization and threats to security, progress and development in the coming decades should not be neglected.

37. I have previously recommended that all Member States should be invited to the international conference of new or restored democracies. This is something the host of each conference should decide in consultation with other Member States. I see a need, however, for all Member States to reflect more actively on the direction of the democratic movement as we enter the new millennium.

38. As we prepare for the first international conference on the African continent, it is vital not to lose momentum in the process of strengthening democratic institutions and development. The General Assembly and all other organs and bodies of the United Nations have an important role in that process. For my part, I am committed to the ideals of democracy and am determined to work to see them attained in the daily work of the United Nations.

Notes

[1] The Web site, entitled "Democratization in Governance: International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies," can be found at the following address: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/docs/democratization.htm.

[2] *Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993* (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.